Investing in Urban Infrastructure
The 2017 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence
The 2017 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence: Introduction

OVERVIEW
The Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence (RBA) is a national design award recognizing transformative urban places that contribute to the economic, environmental, and social vitality of American cities. Each biennial, the RBA honors five winners ranging from large, mixed-use developments to modest yet impactful projects.

Founded in 1985 by architect Simeon Bruner, the RBA was created as a means to explore the subtle and difficult process of creating excellence in the urban environment. We do this by seeking out, celebrating, and sharing the stories of some of America’s most inspiring urban development projects.

Since awarding the first medal to Pike Place Market in Seattle three decades ago, the RBA has recognized and documented 83 projects in 27 states. Varying in scale from a series of neighborhood art installations with a $50,000 budget to a $2 billion downtown mixed-used development, these winners offer insight into the diversity of approaches to urban development and the evolution of American cities.

They also reveal common attributes of projects that contribute to building beautiful, healthy, resilient, and socioeconomically vibrant places: the critical role of leadership and vision, the value of collaborative partnerships, the benefits of engaging and empowering people and communities, the importance of anchoring projects in their own unique place and time, and the power of design to create transformative places.

The RBA is intended to be a resource for anyone interested in learning about urban development and a point of departure for local and national conversations about the role of design in cities. Each award cycle is documented with detailed case studies of the winners and an essay that captures observations and lessons learned from the selection process. All of these are available online at www.rudybruneraward.org. We encourage you to join us in our continuing exploration of urban excellence.
THE RBA PROCESS

Each cycle of the RBA prompts a conversation about urban excellence in America. By design, the conversation begins anew every two years with another call for entries, set of submissions, and Selection Committee charged with choosing five winners.

To be eligible, projects must be urban, built (not just a plan or a program), in operation long enough to demonstrate impact, and located within the contiguous United States. The winners are chosen by a six-member Selection Committee newly comprised each cycle to include a mayor and a participant from a prior RBA winner along with other experts in urban design and planning, development and financing, and community engagement.

The committee meets twice: once to review and discuss all the applications and select five finalists, and again to determine the gold and silver medalists. In between, a team from the Bruner Foundation visits each finalist, spending two to three days touring the site, taking photographs, and interviewing people involved in the project to gather additional information for the committee. These site visits are documented in detail in a report for the committee. One gold medalist and four silver medalists are then awarded, with the gold medalist receiving a $50,000 cash prize and each silver medalist receiving $10,000.

Once the medalists are determined, the Bruner Foundation works with the winners to plan events that celebrate the projects. Public programming such as tours and panel discussions provide opportunities to highlight the stories of the winners and their impact in the community and spur dialogue about future planning and development.

After the awards are presented, the research and Selection Committee discussions are integrated into detailed case studies and a summary of lessons learned that are made available online on the RBA website and published as a book.

The RBA process includes in-depth applications and Selection Committee discussions (top), site visits to finalists (middle), and award events.
THE RUDY BRUNER AWARD FOR URBAN EXCELLENCE

Eligibility
Built, urban projects located within the continental United States are eligible to apply.

Selection Committee
A new six-member committee is assembled for each biennial award cycle, including a mayor and a participant from a prior winning project.

APPLICATION
The application provides an understanding of the project’s design, development, and impact, including:
- Project data, overview, and description.
- Perspective forms completed by people involved in the project and community.
- Photographs and other visuals.
- Award use letter (opened after medalists are selected).

SELECTION PROCESS
Winners are determined by the Selection Committee through a three-step selection process:
- Selection Committee reviews and discusses applications and selects five finalists.
- Bruner Foundation conducts site visits to collect additional information.
- Selection Committee reviews and discusses site visit findings and determines the medalists.

AWARD & CASE STUDIES
The winners and their stories are documented and shared through presentations and publications:
- On-site award presentations that showcase and celebrate the winners.
- Events, presentations, and tours that highlight the stories of the winners and their impact.
- Detailed case studies with lessons learned from the medalists.

Eligibility
Built, urban projects located within the continental United States are eligible to apply.

Selection Committee
A new six-member committee is assembled for each biennial award cycle, including a mayor and a participant from a prior winning project.

APPLICATION
The application provides an understanding of the project’s design, development, and impact, including:
- Project data, overview, and description.
- Perspective forms completed by people involved in the project and community.
- Photographs and other visuals.
- Award use letter (opened after medalists are selected).

SELECTION PROCESS
Winners are determined by the Selection Committee through a three-step selection process:
- Selection Committee reviews and discusses applications and selects five finalists.
- Bruner Foundation conducts site visits to collect additional information.
- Selection Committee reviews and discusses site visit findings and determines the medalists.

AWARD & CASE STUDIES
The winners and their stories are documented and shared through presentations and publications:
- On-site award presentations that showcase and celebrate the winners.
- Events, presentations, and tours that highlight the stories of the winners and their impact.
- Detailed case studies with lessons learned from the medalists.
THE 2017 RUDY BRUNER AWARD

Each cycle of the RBA yields fresh ideas and perspectives that challenge our assumptions and increase our understanding of how to make great urban places. Individually, projects respond to issues and challenges faced by a particular community in its respective place and time. As a group, they offer us the opportunity to find common threads and develop insight into the continuing evolution of cities and placemaking in the second decade of the twenty-first century.

The 2017 Selection Committee reviewed 48 applications from 34 communities in 22 states distributed across the entire country. Projects ranged in scale from development budgets of $50,000 to more than $492 million.

Many factors contribute to the assessment of applications and projects. A conversation about what constitutes “urban excellence” is an integral part of the process. It begins with the Selection Committee’s first meeting to review and discuss the applicants and carries through to the determination of the medalists and observations about the winners and award cycle.

While the 2017 committee members considered many issues in their assessment of the projects, the following questions emerged as key criteria that guided the selection process:

- Are the project’s goals and intent clear? Does it exhibit a thoughtful process for achieving them?
- Was the process inclusive? Is the project accessible and beneficial to a broad spectrum of the public?
- Has the project achieved broad public support and impact?
- Has the project been catalytic in generating positive change in its surroundings and in urban life?
- Is the project anchored in its physical, social, cultural, and temporal context? Is it true to its place and time?
- Does the project exhibit excellence in design that makes it both functional and visually striking?
- Does the project evoke meaningful responses?
- Is the project innovative—in concept, process, function, and/or design?
- Does the project demonstrate the ability to inspire, and/or be replicated in, other communities?

Finally, in selecting the gold medalist, the committee considered the potential impact of the award, both locally and nationally. This included evaluating which project and community would get the most benefit or “lift” from receiving the gold medal, as well as the degree to which the project addressed critical planning and development issues facing communities across the country.

The political context inevitably factored into Selection Committee conversations, influencing its choice of and observations about the winners. This cycle followed a contentious presidential campaign and election along with early indications of substantial changes in federal priorities, including an ambitious but vague proposal for much needed investment in infrastructure along with the likelihood of diminished federal funding supporting urban development and social welfare programs. This led to considerable discussion about the role and importance of government leadership and investment in urban infrastructure, which is described in the Lessons Learned chapter.
Gold Medal

BeelStacks Arts & Cultural Campus
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

Silver Medals

Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building
Boston, Massachusetts

Chicago Riverwalk Phases 2 & 3
Chicago, Illinois

Iberville Offsite Rehabs Phases I & II
New Orleans, Louisiana

La Kretz Innovation Campus + Arts District Park
Los Angeles, California
SELECTION COMMITTEE
Titles and positions of committee members were effective as of May 2017.

Knox White, Hon. ASLA
Mayor
City of Greenville
Greenville, South Carolina

M. David Lee, FAIA
President and Managing Partner
Stull and Lee Incorporated
Boston, Massachusetts

Deidre Schmidt
CEO
CommonBond Communities
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Kimberly Driggins
Director of Strategic Planning
City of Detroit Planning and Development Department
Detroit, Michigan

Willett Moss, ASLA, FAAR
Partner
CMG Landscape Architecture
San Francisco, California

Scot Spencer
Associate Director for Advocacy and Influence
Center for Community and Economic Opportunity at The Annie E. Casey Foundation
Baltimore, MD
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The 2017 RBA selection process was facilitated by Jay Farbstein, who participated in all of the site visits and oversaw—along with RBA Director Anne-Marie Lubenau—development of the site visit reports, winner case studies and lessons learned, and the 2017 publication.

Jay Farbstein, PhD, FAIA is an architect and researcher. He leads a consulting practice in Los Angeles, California that specializes in helping public sector clients develop and document their requirements for building projects as well as in evaluating how well those buildings perform.

Anne-Marie Lubenau, FAIA is the director of the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence at the Bruner Foundation. She is dedicated to engaging people in the process of design and to increasing understanding of the built environment and its impact on our lives.

Danya Sherman is an independent consultant, researcher, and writer based in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Her work includes creating, contributing to, and leading programs in arts, education, and urban development in collaboration with academic, nonprofit, and public-sector clients.

Robert Shibley, FAIA, FAICP is dean of the School of Architecture and Planning at the University at Buffalo. He founded The Urban Design Project, where he developed an award-winning ensemble of plans for the City of Buffalo.

Richard Wener, PhD is an environmental psychologist and professor in the Department of Technology, Culture, and Society at the Polytechnic School of Engineering of New York University, where he heads the Sustainable Urban Environments program.

Elizabeth Chesla, MA helps individuals and organizations around the globe communicate clearly and effectively in both print and online media. She has over 20 years of experience writing, editing, and teaching English and professional communication.

ABOUT THE BRUNER FOUNDATION

Established in 1963 by Rudy and Martha Bruner, the Bruner Foundation seeks to inspire meaningful social change. Building collaborative partnerships, leveraging resources, and tackling complex social issues are common threads in the foundation’s 50-year history. The foundation has placed priority on assisting neglected and disenfranchised segments of society and has influenced national policy in health care delivery, Holocaust studies, education, and nonprofit evaluation methodologies and increased understanding of the urban built environment.

For more information, contact:
Bruner Foundation, Inc.
130 Prospect Street
Cambridge, MA 02139

617.492.8404
info@brunerfoundation.org
www.brunerfoundation.org
**COMPLETE LIST OF MEDALISTS**

2017  
SteelStacks Arts & Cultural Campus | Bethlehem, PA  
Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building | Boston, MA  
Chicago Riverwalk Phases 2 & 3 | Chicago, IL  
Iberville Offsite Rehabs I & II | New Orleans, LA  
La Kretz Innovation Campus + Arts District Park | Los Angeles, CA

2015  
Miller’s Court | Baltimore, MD  
Falls Park on the Reedy | Greenville, SC  
Grand Rapids Downtown Market | Grand Rapids, MI  
Quixote Village | Olympia, WA  
Uptown District | Cleveland, OH

2013  
Inspiration Kitchens – Garfield Park | Chicago, IL  
Congo Street Initiative | Dallas, TX  
Louisville Waterfront Park | Louisville, KY  
The Steel Yard | Providence, RI  
Via Verde—The Green Way | Bronx, NY

2011  
The Bridge Homeless Assistance Center | Dallas, TX  
Brooklyn Bridge Park | Brooklyn, NY  
Civic Space Park | Phoenix, AZ  
Gary Comer Youth Center & College Prep | Chicago, IL  
The Santa Fe Rail Yard Redevelopment | Santa Fe, NM

2009  
Inner-City Arts | Los Angeles, CA  
Hunts Point Riverside Park | Bronx, NY  
Millennium Park | Chicago, IL  
St. Joseph Rebuild | New Orleans, LA  
The Community Chalkboard & Podium | Charlottesville, VA

2007  
Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh | Pittsburgh, PA  
Artists for Humanity Epicenter | Boston, MA  
Crossroads Project & Marsupal Bridge | Milwaukee, WI  
High Point Redevelopment Project | Seattle, WA  
LA Design Center | Los Angeles, CA  
Columbus Circle Public Plaza | New York, NY

2005  
Portland Streetcar Project | Portland, OR  
Lower Town Artist Relocation Program | Paducah, KY  
Heidelberg Project | Detroit, MI  
Fruitvale Village | Oakland, CA  
Downtown Silver Spring | Silver Spring, MD

2003  
Camino Nuevo Charter Academy | Los Angeles, CA  
Bridgemarket | New York, NY  
Colorado Court | Santa Monica, CA  
Red Hook Community Justice Center | Brooklyn, NY  
Providence River Relocation | Providence, RI

2001  
Village of Arts & Humanities | Philadelphia, PA  
Swan’s Market Place | Oakland, CA  
South Platte River Greenway | Denver, CO  
New Jersey Performing Arts Center | Newark, NJ  
Lower East Side Tenement Museum | New York, NY

1999  
Yerba Buena Gardens | San Francisco, CA  
ARTScorps LA | Los Angeles, CA  
National AIDS Memorial Grove | San Francisco, CA  
Parkside Preservation | Philadelphia, PA  
Portland Public Market | Portland, ME

1997  
The Times Square | New York, NY  
Cleveland Historic Warehouse District | Cleveland, OH  
Project Row Houses | Houston, TX  
Center in the Square | Roanoke, VA  
Himen Hin-nu | Oakland, CA

1995  
Maya Angelou Community Initiative | Portland, OR  
Campus Circle | Milwaukee, WI  
Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative | Boston, MA  
Greenpoint Manufacturing & Design Center | Brooklyn, NY  
Harlem Meer | New York City, NY  
Lownertown | Saint Paul, MN

1993  
Harbor Point | Boston, MA  
New Community Corporation | Newark, NJ  
Betts-Longworth Historic District | Cincinnati, OH  
Beyond Homelessness | San Francisco, CA  
The Park at Post Office Square | Boston, MA

1991  
Greenmarket | New York, NY  
Brooklyn-Queens Greensway | Brooklyn/Queens, NY  
Ocean Drive Improvement Project | Miami Beach, FL  
Roslindale Village Main Street | Boston, MA  
West Clinton Action Plan | Portland, OR

1989  
Tenant Interim Lease Program | New York, NY  
Portland Downtown Plan | Portland, OR  
Southwest Corridor Project | Boston, MA  
Stowe Recreation Path | Stowe, VT  
Radial Reuse Project | Lincoln, NE  
Cabrillo Village | Saticoy, CA

1987  
Pike Place Market | Seattle, WA  
Casa Rita | South Bronx, NY  
Quality Hill | Kansas City, MO  
Fairmount Health Center | Philadelphia, PA  
St. Francis Square | San Francisco, CA
Together the 83 RBA winners reflect a diversity of scale and approaches and the evolution of cities and urban development in America.